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ABSTRACT

This preliminary report examines the complex relationship between black adolescents' school performance and black Americans' intragroup social organization, as well as the intrusive influence of the larger social structure. It is based on a two-year ethnographic study of high school students in a black section of Washington, D.C. Emphasis is on the intragroup response--fictive kinship--and its impact on school achievement among black adolescents. The study examines the relationship between school performance and the students' unarticulated valuation of the fictive kinship system extant in the school context. The study also describes how and why some black adolescents are successful in school, and offers ethnographic evidence showing why the majority of the students at the school are unsuccessful on school measures of success. Preliminary findings indicate: (1) the importance and effect of the fictive kinship system on black adolescents' school performance and (2) the potentially powerful counterbalancing influence of the instructional and organizational supports in the school context on students' academic achievement. While fictive kinship and other indigenous cultural responses make academic achievement more difficult, the mere existence of these responses does not necessarily result in school failure. An extensive list of references is appended. (LHW)

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BLACK STUDENT SCHOOL SUCCESS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN A LARGE URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

A Preliminary Report

Submitted to

THE SPENCER FOUNDATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This preliminary report examines the complex relationship between Black adolescents' school performance and Black Americans' intragroup social organization, as well as the intrusive influence of the larger social structure. While clearly all of these factors are implicated in Black students' school performance, the greater emphasis in this analysis is on the intragroup response--fictive kinship--and its impact on school achievement among Black adolescents.

The theoretical model used here--fictive kinship--is rooted in Ogbu's cultural ecological analysis and the growing anthropological literature on the coexistence of maintenance within change as a continuous process among human populations. More specifically, the focus of the analysis presented here is on a human type--persistent peoples. The fictive kinship framework enables the researcher to build a conceptual scaffold which emphasizes the effect of the "oppositional process" in the school context and the larger Black community on Black adolescents' school performance. Fictive kinship is identified as the quintessential symbol of Black Americans' social organization, reflecting both their expressive response to a castelike social status and the group's collective enmity toward those features of the larger social system which are perceived to be implicated in Black Americans' continued social and economic degradation.

The fundamental question guiding the research design and subsequent analysis is anthropological in nature and critically appropriate to ethnography; namely, how do Black adolescents achieve school success? The answer to this question is obtained by comparing and contrasting the contextual behavior and school performance of a sample of underachieving and high-achieving students and, secondly, by the tabulated responses to a questionnaire of a larger segment of the student population at the research site. In the tradition of social anthropology, the research utilizes traditional anthropological research strategies: participant observation, interviews, and immersion in the lives of those who are studied. Additionally, in an effort to defuse the criticism frequently leveled at ethnographic research by educators and educational psychologists, the study also incorporates research strategies most often associated with non-anthropological research: questionnaires and other instrumentation. Essentially, the study examines the relationship between school performance and the students' unarticulated valuation of the fictive kinship system extant in the school context. Their perceptions of the influence of the opportunity structure on academic motivation are also analyzed.

The study also describes how and why some Black adolescents are successful in school, and offers ethnographic evidence showing why the majority of the students at the school are unsuccessful on school

measures of success. Additional evidence is emerging which suggests a gender-specific link in the school performance of Black students at the high school level. The emerging findings also suggest how an analysis of Black adolescents' school performance can contribute to a greater understanding of the relationship between a social group's status in a stratified social system and how that status influences their perceptions, behaviors and responses. The students' perception of the opportunity structure and fictive kinship may act as a barrier to school achievement and upward mobility aspirations; however, the effect of these factors on Black students' school performance can be effectively muted by an organizational and instructional structure in the school context which pertinaciously supports Black children's penchant for collective rather than individual achievement or, alternatively, seeks to weaken their tendency to view the collective or group as paramount.

Preliminary findings emerging from the study indicate both the importance and effect of the fictive kinship system on Black adolescents' school performance and the potentially powerful counterbalancing influence of the instructional and organizational supports in the school context on students' academic achievement--their parents' backgrounds, socioeconomic conditions, subsistence tasks and role repertoire notwithstanding. In general, this case study suggests that while fictive kinship and other indigenous cultural responses, as well as the students' group perception of the dominant opportunity structure, make academic achievement more difficult, the mere existence of these responses do not necessarily result in school failure. Strategies which the students develop in order to minimize the effects of these existing responses are examined and their contribution to school success noted.

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Ethnographic research is by its very nature a long, tortuous process. Consequently, in the course of writing an ethnographic research report with its "thick [cultural] descriptions," many debts are inevitably incurred. During the data gathering and analysis phases of the research reported here, I have been extremely fortunate in having the support and friendship of so many helpful people. To each of them I am eternally grateful.

I am particularly grateful to the District of Columbia Public School System and its Office of Qualitative Assurance. My greatest thanks, however, must go to the principal, students, parents, faculty and staff at Capital High School, the research site. It is impossible to list the names of all the persons at the school and in the surrounding community who supported or participated in the data collections. However, even if space and time were not constraints, I would not identify them because I pledged to them complete anonymity and confidentiality. The community and school have been assigned a fictitious common name in my records, field notes and manuscripts. I hope they know that without their cooperation, openness, and cordiality, the study could not have been completed.

The study also would not have been possible without the financial support of The Spencer Foundation. I wish to acknowledge the support of The Foundation, particularly Mr. H. Thomas James, Mrs. Marion Faldet, and Ms. Linda M. Schumacher, all of whom have gone beyond the competent performance of their official duties in assisting me in the completing of this preliminary report. Yet the Foundation and its personnel bear no responsibility for the content of this report.

In ethnographic research, the magnitude and complexity of the data often lead to uncertainty about the best course of action to take regarding collection, coding, analysis and interpretation. On such occasions it is enormously helpful to have the advice and counsel of knowledgeable persons who have faced somewhat similar circumstances in their own work and are willing to take the time to become increasingly familiar with a research study in which they are not involved, in order to help someone else find solutions to the specific problems facing them. In my case, I benefitted immeasurably from the advice and counsel of my mentor, Dr. John U. Ogbu, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, whose work and encouragement inspired the research study reported here. To him I am sincerely grateful.

How does one thank all of those persons who carried the workload, especially those persons on site who performed the daily, mundane tasks which are so tedious in their form and function, yet so critical to the

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem

The preoccupation of social scientists, including anthropologists, with underachievement of Black adolescents on school measures of success is widely documented in research literature (Baratz and Baratz 1970; Bernstein 1961; Coleman 1966; Green and Farquhar 1965; Hale 1977, 1980, 1982; Harvey 1980; Hilliard 1978; Jensen 1969; Katz 1967; Labov 1972; McDermott 1974, 1982; Scherer and Slawski 1977; Shockley 1970). In fact, this preoccupation has, most often, obscured the accomplishments of many high-achieving Black adolescents and, more importantly, has, perhaps unwittingly, reinforced the notion that such individuals do not exist.

In contrast to the large number of studies devoted to Black children who do poorly in school, studies of Black children who perform well in school are relatively few (see Davidson and Greenberg 1967; Edwards 1976; Mackler 1970, 1972; Marchant 1976; McCabe 1967; Ross and Glaser 1973; Shade 1978, 1981; Trotter 1981). One of the primary weaknesses of previous investigations of Black students' school performance is that the accomplishments and achievements of Black students--particularly at the low-income level--who are successful in the school context have been virtually ignored. Hence the value of the study reported here is that it seeks to fill that void, presenting a theoretical model as well as an explanation of Black students' academic excellence.

2. Goals of the Study

This report presents prelimihary findings from a two-year ethnographic study of Black adolescent school success conducted during school years 1982-83 and 1983-84 in a senior high school in a historically Black section of Washington, D.C. While the locus of the study is Capital High,[1] it is not limited to the school. In fact, following the ethnographic tradition of social anthropology, the study sought to obtain a holistic view of the Capital High Community, focusing primarily on the community's indigenous social organization, including its theory of success and how that theory affects adolescent students' academic effort.

The central goals of this study are: to describe how Black adolescents achieve school success; to ascertain the factors which distinguish Black adolescents who do well in school from those who do not; and to determine to what extent the unique features of the successful students are a function of their degree of encapsulation in the Black fictive kinship system. The specific objectives are: (1) to identify the salient characteristics of Black adolescents who do well in school; (2) to test the hypothesis that marginal membership in the Black fictive kinship system facilitates school success by deemphasizing cultural and racial factors; (3) to document the students' theory of success and its relationship to their academic performance and school behavior; (4) more generally, to test Ogbu's (1978) hypothesis about the relationship between ecological structure and school performance; (5) to contribute methodologically to the growing ethnographic study of

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[1]Capital High is a pseudonym.

schooling; and (6) to suggest ways in which school performance of Black and other nondominant-group children can be improved.

3. Rationale

Four assumptions undergird this analysis. First, following Ogbu (1978, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1983a, 1983b, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c), the American social structure is viewed as a multiple system of stratification characterized primarily by caste rather than class or socioeconomic status features for Blacks and similar nondominant groups. He argues that there are three types of minority groups in America: namely, autonomous, immigrant, and castelike or subordinate minorities. Castelike minorities, according to Ogbu (1978, 1981a, 1981b, 1981c, 1981g, 1982a, 1982b), are distinguished from the other types in that (1) they have been incorporated into the society rather involuntarily and permanently, (2) they face a job and status ceiling, and (3) they tend to formulate their economic and social problems in terms of collective institutional discrimination, which they do not perceive to be a temporary state. This social history, in Ogbu's view, profoundly affects the way they view their country and their response to its system of schooling. Following Ogbu, this researcher assumes that for Black Americans, caste features are more influential than class features in their access to the rewards of the social system.

The second assumption is that, like most other Americans, Black Americans tend to see schooling as a vital link to the job market and social mobility (see Edwards 1976; Ogbu 1978, 1983a, 1983b, 1984a, 1984b). Hence, a major concern of Black high school students is the relationship between the school curriculum and the types of jobs

available to them as adults in the labor force. This issue will be explored in this report vis-a-vis the Capital High students' perception of the relationship between academic effort and socioeconomic mobility as adults in the work force.

The third assumption of the research is that a study of why some Black adolescents do well in school is heavily dependent upon an analysis which considers not only the synchronic picture but the historical context as well. A synchronic analysis is inadequate because it fails to recognize the ongoing and cumulative effects of the job ceiling and of limited schooling opportunities. For example, before the Civil War, most Black Americans were denied access to printed information, a critical component of the American society. This period of "compulsory ignorance" (see Berry and Blassingame 1982; DuBois 1970; Weinberg 1977) had and continues to have a profound impact on the cognitive and linguistic skills of Black Americans, as well as on their perception of and response to schooling. Moreover, the author also assumes that the attitude and response of Black adolescents to the public school system has varied over time in correlation with the extant Black ecological conditions and their perception of the nature and extent of the job ceiling confronting them in the larger opportunity structure (see J. Williams 1985).

The fourth and perhaps the most critical assumption of this report is that the severe structural limitations confronting Americans of African ancestry have given rise to a collective identity system among Black Americans (see V. Green 1981; Nobles 1974; Spicer 1971, 1980)--an identity structure in which the goals and aspirations of the group take precedence over individual ambitions and desires. The emergence

of a collective identity system within a human population most often leads to the development of an "oppositional process" and the subsequent appearance of a "people" (see Spicer 1971). Often this "oppositional process" is manifested in the social group's tenacious disavowal of those activities and behaviors which are generally associated with another human population, usually the dominating social group. For example, Black Americans appear to eschew those behaviors and activities generally associated with white Americans, or what they identify as "acting white" behaviors. In fact, it will be argued that it is the "unique" nature of the historical experience to which the group attaches significant meaning which enhances the possibility of a group's designation as a "people." This is possible, Spicer (1980) argues, because each human population has a "historical experience which no other group has undergone." For example, the Jews experienced the Holocaust; Black Americans experienced slavery. Even though a social group may share a human experience with another social group (e.g., other social groups have been enslaved at various times in the history of the world), no other social group, in Spicer's (1980) analysis, has experienced the particular historical experience in the same way. Hence it is both the uniqueness of the historical heritage of a particular social group and the meaning it attaches to these common identity symbols which are influential in the group's emergence as "a people."

Evidence will be presented which suggests that individual members of the Black community tend to eschew behavior and actions that conflict with the generally accepted established cultural boundaries, at any given historical period, and negative group sanctions are enforced

resulting in the maintenance and persistence of the group (see Gibson 1982; Moone 1981; Ogbu 1983a, 1983b, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c).

In sum, the assumptions guiding the present report suggest the need to look more closely at the academic performance, beliefs and value systems, including the theory of success, of Black adolescents whose achievement on school measures of success exceeds the performance of most of their peers, closely approximating that of dominant-group children. Such a focus should enable us to more readily extrapolate those factors critical to high academic achievement and, hence, success as adults in the labor force.

4. The Fictive Kinship Model

a. Definition and Characterization

One Black American cultural feature which has emerged from this oppositional process and which has implications for many components of Black American life and culture, including school performance and behavior, is what this writer identifies as fictive kinship. Among anthropologists, the umbrella term "fictive kinship" is used when kinship terminology refers to people within the society to whom one is not necessarily related by birth (Bloch 1971; see also Brain 1972; Folb 1980:1-26; Fortes 1969:239-242; Freed 1973; Hale 1982:48; Liebow 1967; Norbeck and Befu 1958; Pitt-Rivers 1968, 1973:90-91; Stack 1975; Staples 1974, 1981). However, as conceptualized in the study reported here, the anthropological definition of fictive kinship has been broadened to encompass the self-definition of an entire social group: Black Americans. The definition of this anthropological concept has been stretched to capture the essence of the oppositional process within the

Black community and between Black and white Americans. This component of Black American culture--fictive kinship--emerged in response to two features of their sociocultural reality: (1) the castelike relationship between Black and white Americans in which Black Americans were first slaves, then a cheap source of agricultural labor (Anderson 1973, 1975; Bullock 1967; Spivey 1978), later a cheap labor source for the industrialization of America (Anderson 1973, 1975; Bullock 1967; Spivey 1978), and, more recently, laborers in semiskilled jobs and careers in urbanized America (Drake and Cayton 1970); and (2) historically, the tendency of dominant-group Americans to see Black Americans as an undifferentiated mass of people to whom inherent strengths and, more importantly, inherent weaknesses are ascribed. Interestingly, in response to the structural limitations of the social system, this assumption of sameness among Black people became a critical identity symbol of Black culture, in that they inverted the negative assumptions of dominant-group Americans (Holt 1972; see also Fordham 1982a, 1982b; Ogbu 1983a, 1983b, 1984a, 1984b), thus aiding the emergence of a collective social self.

As operationally defined in this research, fictive kinship, Black Americans' group response to structural limitations in the social system, is a superordinate concept used to describe the symbol of group unity among Black Americans; it is a concept representing the emergence of a sense of peoplehood within the community. The concept is employed to delineate the tendency in the Black community to emphasize group loyalty, boundary maintenance, and a collective identity system, as well as the tendency to negatively sanction behaviors thought to be at variance with group symbols, cultural entities, etc. (see Fordham

1982a, 1982b; Ogbu 1982a, 1983a, 1983b). This sense of peoplehood is clearly evident in the use of kinship terms among group members. Examples of pseudo-kinship terms abound in the language of Black adolescents and adults: "brother," "sister," "soul brother," "soul sister," "blood," "bleed," "folks," "members," "the people," "my people" (see Folb 1980; Liebow 1967; Sargent 1985a; Stack 1974; Staples 1975).

More specifically, fictive kinship is used to describe the particular mind set, i.e., the specific world view of those persons who are appropriately labeled "Black." Since "Blackness" is more than a skin color, fictive kinship is the concept used to denote the moral judgment the group makes on its members (see Brain 1972). Essentially, the concept suggests that the mere possession of African features and/or being of African descent does not automatically make one a Black person, nor does it suggest that one is a member in good standing of the group. One can be black in color, but choose not to seek membership in the fictive kinship system, and/or be denied membership by the group because one's behavior, activities, and lack of manifest loyalty are at variance with those thought to be appropriate and group-specific.

On the other hand, because only Black Americans are involved in the evaluation of group members' eligibility for membership, the criteria used to judge one's worthiness for membership are totally group-specific. Consequently, unlike the criteria for promotion in the workplace or the grades one earns in school, the criteria for membership in the fictive kinship system in the Black community are controlled and determined solely by Black Americans. Fictive kinship is the ideal by which all members of the group are judged, as well as the instrument used to distinguish the real members of the group from those who are

"spurious" (M. Williams 1981a) and not what they appear to be (see Castile 1981; Napper 1973; Poussaint and McLean 1968; Spicer 1961, 1971, 1980). It is anchored in, but actually transcends, specific genealogical criteria. Theoretically, fictive kinship is symbolic of an immutable relationship of group solidarity and anchorage, or what Y. Cohen (1964) has aptly labeled "sociological interdependence."

The emotional identification which ensures the survival of the group results from the dominant group's forcing onus on every Black American for the actions and deeds of all other Black Americans. The following examples can be offered to illustrate what is meant by this claim.

b. Examples in the Research Literature

The "insurrection" of Nat Turner (see Haley 1976; Styron 1966) in 1831 in Southampton, Virginia, led to massive restriction of (1) movement and (2) intragroup contact of peoples of African descent regardless of where they lived in America as well as their clear lack of involvement in the "insurrection." Indeed, Weinberg (1977:16) describes how the white residents of Washington, D.C., "excluded all Black children from the integrated Sabbath schools in that city as a result of the insurrection." This was done despite the fact that (1) these children had traditionally attended mixed Sabbath schools in the city and (2) the children were in no way involved in the "insurrection" led by Nat Turner. Thus, onus for Turner's behavior was extended to all Black Americans based not on their culpability but rather on one common feature they shared with Turner: skin color. It was this kind of arbitrary, irrational response on the part of white Americans to the

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individual acts of particular Black Americans which fostered the development of the group response that is here labeled "fictive kinship."

Stack (1974), for example, defines the fictive kinship phenomenon as it exists among low-income Black families in a Black community in Illinois. There she found women incorporating non-kin members of the community into their kin structure based on their willingness to take on the responsibilities and behaviors usually ascribed to and expected of genealogical kinsmen. Stack concludes that the Black family structure differs from that of the dominant group in that it tends to be more flexible in order to accommodate "clusters of kin who may or may not reside together" (1970:311). Thus, methodologically, Stack found it necessary to look at the life history of one Black family over four generations. Since the Black family, like white and most other families, is designed to protect and care for children, a differential structure or structures are most often a response to the ecological or material conditions of the group. Accordingly, Stack's methodology and subsequent analysis of Black family structure do not readily lend themselves to a "pathological" conclusion. Instead, she suggests that the ecological conditions (i.e., poverty and widespread under- and unemployment, especially of the male members) dictate the structure. Her conclusion is supported in a later study of the Black extended family completed by Aschenbrenner (1973, 1975).

Similarly, Liebow (1967) describes fictive kinship relationships among men who populated Tally's Corner--a street corner in Washington, D.C.--as "pseudo-kinship." He suggests that the use of kinship terms when addressing each other is an attempt by the actors of Tally's Corner to embellish and upgrade their "fragile" relationships with

each other by modeling their interactions in a manner similar to the genealogical model of kinship in the Black community.

In summary, fictive kinship reflects the shared oppressive conditions Black Americans presently experience and/or have inherited. In short, it is their strategy for coping with the power of white America. This evolved response, i.e., fictive kinship, is taught to children, often unconsciously, by their parents and other members of the Black community at a very early age as part of the children's enculturation process. Consequently, it is argued that Black children learn to associate their life chances and their "success" potential with those of their Black classmates in a way that may not be true for other children. Group membership is paramount in their peer relationships--so much so that these social relationships are frequently based on criteria associated with kin-relationships; i.e., my brother is my brother regardless of what he does (Y. Cohen 1971:25; see also Haskins 1975; Sargent 1985a).

Therefore, fictive kinship is suggested as the principal articulator of Black Americans' social relationships. It is argued here that, as the critical symbol of their sense of peoplehood, fictive kinship leads to pronounced boundary-maintaining behaviors among Black Americans. However, as Y. Cohen (1964) notes, emotional identification with one's primary group is a relative phenomenon, i.e., the degree to which the individual feels one with his/her group must, of necessity, be distinguished from the individual's personal assessment of who he/she is. The awareness of "self" as a separate entity from the group, as Cohen makes clear, is necessary because the complete fusion of the "self" with the group is neither possible nor desirable.

Hence, there is an urgent need to look at individual differences within Black American society despite the general tendency toward fictive kinship, i.e., "sociological interdependence."

The existence of fictive kinship within the community suggests that Black Americans have come to see themselves as more than just a race of people; they have come to see themselves as an "enduring" people (see Castile 1981; V. Green 1981; Ogbu 1983a, 1983b, 1984a, 1984b; Spicer 1961, 1971, 1980) with clearly identifiable attitudes, behaviors, and a stock of symbols that, "together with their meanings, concerning their experience as a people, . . . constitute their collective identity" (Spicer 1980:347).

The point being stressed here is that this lack of individual differentiation from both outside and within the group suggests an alternative explanation for the school performance and academic achievement of Black adolescents--namely, the explanation offered in this study: fictive kinship.

5. Hypothesis

In conjunction with the fictive kinship model of Black Americans' social organization, it was hypothesized that in the school context, fictive kinship would be manifested in a tendency on the part of Black teenagers to emphasize racial groupness or collectivity, and to regard as more appropriate those attitudes and behaviors which are seen as Black rather than white. Initially and specifically, the general question which the study sought to answer was phrased as follows: To what extent does encapsulation in the fictive kinship system lead to school failure? Conversely, to what extent does marginality in the

fictive kinship system promote school success? It was suggested that those students who are not totally encapsulated in the fictive kinship system tend to accept school norms and develop and express appropriate school-related behaviors which result in their greater degree of academic success. The inductive nature of the study was influential in the modification of the initial hypothesis to more nearly capture the actors' or folk understanding and definition of the problem associated with Black Americans' school achievement. This modification resulted in a hypothesis which led to a focus on how Black Americans' often unconscious opposition to the dominant cultural system influences academic effort and behavior.

B. RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Fusing Ethnography and Quantification

There are many ways of "knowing" (see Rist 1977). Two of the main ways of "knowing" identified and condoned in academic settings are ethnography and quantification. The research design used in this study incorporates both ethnographic and quantitative methods.

Motivated by the desire to know what is actually occurring "inside high schools"(Cusick 1973; see also Boyer 1983), as well as a fear of charges of data contamination (see Clinton 1975; Fetterman 1984; Klockars 1979; Polsky 1967), this research combines the two major research paradigms--ethnography and quantification--used in social science research, hoping to diffuse the charge frequently made by educators and policymakers that anthropological research is "soft" and lacking in scientific reliability. A discussion of how the nature and scope of the two approaches are reflected in the selection of the research site, field procedures, and the "grounded" instrumentation follows.

a. Ethnography

Ethnography has been variously defined in the research literature by anthropologists and, more recently, by educators (see Agar 1980; Berreman 1968; Goetz and LeCompte 1984; Kluckhohn 1944; Ogbu 1981f; Overholt and Stallings 1976; Pelto and Pelto 1973; Spradley 1979; Wilcox 1982; Wolcott 1973, 1975). While no consensus exists either among anthropologists or educators regarding the definition of the

ethnographic method, perhaps one of the most insightful and widely quoted definitions has been suggested by anthropologists. Following Berreman (1968), Wolcott (1975) defines ethnography as the "science of cultural description." In his view, ethnography is the anthropologist's literal "picture" of the culture of an interacting social group. Wolcott's (1975) definition and general description of ethnography and ethnographic methods as practiced by anthropologists are supported in Berreman's earlier analysis. Basically, like Wolcott, he claims that a well-written ethnography presents the reader with a "set of rules which describe how people [in a particular social group] act in their culture" (Berreman 1968:338).

As broadly conceptualized, the ethnographic research strategy encompasses a wide range of methods, including those which could be described as naturalistic (Gloudner 1971; Henry 1963; Rist 1973), observational (Lightfoot 1978; Ogbu 1974; Peshkin 1978; M. Williams 1978, 1980), descriptive (Leacock 1969; Rosenfeld 1971; Wolcott 1967), and contextual (Ogbu 1974; Rosenfeld 1971; Wolcott 1967). As used by anthropologists, this approach departs sharply from quantitative research techniques, the method of data collection and analysis most often used by educators and psychologists. Since "culture" is the major concept used by anthropologists in both collection and analysis of data, their primary goal is twofold: (1) to observe and describe contextual human behavior, and (2) to interpret the implicit meaning associated with that observed behavior (see Berreman 1968; Gearing 1973; Geertz 1973; Spindler 1974; Wilcox 1982).

Anthropologists are not expected to begin fieldwork with a "tabula rasa"; they are also not expected to have developed specific,

testable hypotheses, nor are they expected to collect structural data to test such hypotheses. Rather, the ethnographer begins with a broadly conceived hunch or generalized theory (see Glaser and Strauss 1967), and collects large quantities of data from the research population from which inferences are drawn about the meaning of the observed social behavior. Traditionally, a priori assumptions were negatively sanctioned, as were questionnaires and other forms of instrumentation not developed in situ. Moreover, the inseparable relationship between human behavior and meaning made ethnography the exclusive research tool of anthropologists, since an in-depth knowledge of culture was considered to be a prerequisite for an attribution of meaning to observed human behavior.

Since most anthropologists viewed and still view fieldwork as a rite of passage (see Mead cited in Maday 1975:41), persons desiring to become anthropologists were, for the most part, obligated to complete this rite in a culture other than their own and preferably in a culture existing in a foreign land. Recently, however, anthropologists have begun to do what is known as native anthropology or insider research (see Aguilar 1981; Gwaltney 1981; Messerschmidt 1981a, 1981b; Wolcott 1973, 1981), which has as one of its primary goals the illumination of the human conditions in the anthropologist's native social and/or indigenous cultural systems (see Aguilar 1981; Bailey 1977; Gwaltney 1981; D. Jones 1970; Messerschmidt 1981a; Peshkin 1978; Uchendu 1965; M. Williams 1974, 1980, 1981a, 1981b; Wolcott 1973).

In the school context, ethnography's greatest strength is its ability to offer educators and policymakers rigorous descriptions of what actually goes on in classrooms (Mehan 1982) and settings outside

the school context. Moreover, unlike quantification, ethnography is capable of illuminating how, in addition to why, certain conditions, behaviors, activities, etc., persist. Indeed, a primary goal of ethnography and ethnographic research is to illustrate the "machinery that generates the social order observed" (Mehan 1982:60). A secondary preoccupation of ethnography is to make sure that the "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) obtained are formulated and described in ways that are meaningful to the people the ethnographer studies (Mehan 1982:60).

In general, ethnography as practiced by anthropologists and more recently by some educators, with its comparative/contrastive focus, its emphasis on contextualized meanings, its holistic orientation, and its ability to foster the development of grounded theoretical concepts (Goetz and LeCompte 1984; Hymes 1982; Ogbu 1981g), enables the individual researcher to develop an ethnographically valid inquiry regarding social groups in the school context.

Still another important strength of traditional ethnographic research is its flexibility and comprehensiveness (see Hymes 1982). In the school context the flexible nature of ethnographic research is evident in its self-corrective nature (Hymes 1982:24) or, as Agar (1980) labels it, its "funnel approach." This approach incorporates all of the contradictions thought to be characteristic of ethnographic research; i.e., it encompasses humanity and science, involvement and detachment, breadth and depth, subordination and dominance, friend and stranger (Agar 1980:203-204).

As used in this study, the "funnel approach" necessitated that at the beginning of the research, the methodology was characterized by

"breadth and humanity," and later, within the context of the beginning, "depth, problem-focus, and science at the narrow end" (Agar 1980:13). In short, the qualitative process utilized in this study was "dialectic, not linear." Initially, the researcher collected some data, then attempted to analyze it (find the patterns); collected more data incorporating the newly discovered patterns which emerged from the original data, followed by more analysis; and so on. How this method was modified and carried out in actual practice is described in greater detail elsewhere in this report.

b. Quantification

Quantification is the second way of "knowing" which is widely practiced in academic settings. Traditionally, anthropologists have relied most heavily on qualitative research and tended to eschew quantitative research techniques, especially those requiring the development of research instruments prior to the beginning of the research study. This emphasis and deemphasis has led to the observation that, while one of ethnography's greatest strengths is its internal validity--i.e., the propositions generated, refined, or tested match the causal conditions that obtain in human life (see Goetz and LeCompte 1984)--, it is also widely noted that the lack of emphasis on reliability among ethnographers seriously weakens the credibility of their findings. A. Johnson (1978:43) defines reliability as a measure of "the extent that two or more observers of the same event(s) take the same measure of it" (see also Goetz and LeCompte 1984). Hence, reliability, the most important component of quantitative research design, is virtually nonexistent in traditional ethnographies

(see Benedict 1934; Malinowski 1922, 1935; Mead 1928, 1930; Radcliffe-Brown 1965).

Since anthropologists view themselves as scientists, there is a need for their research findings to reflect a concern with the generally accepted practices of scientists (see Brim and Spain 1974; Pelto and Pelto 1978). As a research tool, quantification has held a virtual hegemony in both the natural and social sciences, so much so that many non-anthropologists, especially educators and policymakers, tend to equate the lack of quantification in the design and procedures of a proposed study with a lack of scientific perspective (see McDermott and Hood 1982). Consequently, the anthropologist who seeks to study schools must couch her analysis in terms which in some way reflect a way of knowing which is understandable to an audience comprised primarily of non-anthropologists.

2. Selection of Research Site

Realizing the variety of ways one might choose to measure academic success among Black adolescents, and recognizing the limitations of the quantitative research paradigm, the researcher believed the choice of research site for the completion of this study to be critical. The salient criteria guiding the selection of the research site included: (1) accessibility to the research project and its goals; (2) willingness of both teachers and administrators to work with the researcher; and (3) a concentration of low-income, high-achieving students. Other geographic and political factors, as well as the endorsement of the District of Columbia Board of Education, were influential in the selection of the research site.

School officials began responding to the researcher's request for a long-term research assignment by admitting that such a request was highly unusual and therefore unlikely to be granted. While these school officials realized the potential value of the study, they were reluctant to ask their high school principals to permit the study at one of their schools, primarily because of its long-term, intrusive nature. Ultimately, the District of Columbia Public Schools allowed the researcher to interview the principals of the schools where she was interested in conducting the study. After several telephone interviews and a more limited number of direct, in-person interviews, the ethnographer was able to obtain the consent of the principal at Capital High to conduct the study there.

The setting was ideal in that it met the chief criteria desired by the ethnographer: a predominantly Black urban high school with a high concentration of high- and underachieving eleventh grade students. The principal of the school was extremely supportive of the goals of the study and went out of his way to introduce the ethnographer to the most cooperative people on his staff and to urge them to do everything they could to assist her in realizing the goals of the study.

3. Selection of Student Sample

It is important to note why the researcher chose to study Black adolescents at the high school level rather than some other group of Black children. For several years, the local newspapers, including The Washington Post (see Feinberg 1984; Sargent 1985b; R. White 1984a), have described the lower performance of Black teens on the annual standardized tests given in the District of Columbia Public Schools.

These reports have pointed out that Black students in the lower grades perform at or much closer to the national norms on such measures than their older peers. This local disparity in achievement among Black students is reported and supported in the research literature (see Lightfoot 1983). The researcher was also reacting to the fact that there is a dearth of ethnographic information on high school students, particularly Black adolescents.

The criteria involved in selecting the student informants for the study were uncomplicated: 24 Black American eleventh grade students, 12 high achievers and 12 underachievers, 6 of whom were male and 6 female in each of the two categories. The first step in the selection process involved asking the counselors and teachers to identify eleventh grade students in both categories that they thought would be willing to participate in such an intrusive, time-consuming study, and whose parents would not disapprove. The researcher was given access to the cumulative folders of the eleventh grade students at the school, and was thus able to verify the claims of both the teachers and the counselors regarding the students' test scores and grades. The ethnographer also obtained further confirmation of the students' status as high or underachievers through informal observations and interviews with other students, teachers, administrative personnel, parents and significant others within the school and the immediate community. Ultimately, in order to build a cushion against the negative effects of student attrition, more student participants than actually needed were selected: 14 underachieving females, 6 underachieving males, 7 high-achieving females, and 6 high-achieving males--a total of 33.

Once the students were identified, informally interviewed, and invited to participate in the study, parental consent was sought and obtained through the submission of a consent form which was approved by the District of Columbia Public Schools, and signed by the principal and the ethnographer.

4. Data Gathering

The base year of the study, 1982-83, was devoted almost exclusively to ethnography and getting to "know" the cultural scene from an anthropological perspective. The primary goal in the data gathering component of the research was to answer the fundamental question in anthropological research: How? That is, how do Black adolescents achieve academic success in the school context? In conjunction with that goal, the ethnographic study was divided into three major phases: (1) school observations and selection of research population; (2) formal and informal interviews with the key informants; and (3) classroom observations, home visitations, and community observations. The second year of data gathering was less intensive and devoted to the second way of "knowing" utilized here: the development and administration of a quantitative research instrument which was grounded in the ethnographic data collected during the first year of the research. Other types of data gathering, such as document study, were ongoing throughout the two-year research period. Following is a brief discussion of each of the phases of the first year of the study, during which an ethnographic base was used, and of the quantification prevalent during the second year.

a. Phase 1--Entering the Field

The first phase of the research--becoming familiar with the research site and getting to know school personnel and the larger student body, as well as selecting the 33 key informants--has been described above. While the lines of demarcation regarding the phases of the study were often blurred and quite flexible, it is probably accurate to say that the first four months--September through December--were limited to this phase.

b. Phase 2--Interviews

Once the research population was established and confirmed, key informant interviews, both formal and informal, were conducted, basically during the months of January through April. Desiring to conform to the repeatedly espoused policy of the school principal--"Nothing will interfere with class time!"--, the ethnographer interviewed the key informants during non-class time, either before school officially began, during lunch hour, or after school. While the format of the formal interview did not vary, the amount of time spent with each informant and, to a more limited extent, the scope of the questions asked, varied--i.e., the number of subquestions varied, depending on the relationship and rapport the ethnographer had with each informant.

Since each class period was about 50 minutes in length, each interview session was close to that amount of time. The ethnographer averaged between three and four 50-minute sessions with each informant. Most interviews with students (as well as with parents and significant others) were tape recorded with their permission and later transcribed verbatim. In those rare instances when the interviews were not tape recorded, notes were taken.

An ethical dilemma facing the researcher throughout the study was how to cope with the issues of confidentiality and anonymity which were promised to the study participants. In order to protect the confidentiality of all informants, everyone who participated in the research study was given a code number, and no names were used on transcripts of taped interviews. Additionally, despite the fact that many of the research notes and interviews were transcribed by the research associate, only the ethnographer knew to whom the code numbers referred. Thirdly, all tapes, field notes, transcripts, and questionnaires were kept at the home of the ethnographer and shared with no one except, in the case of the completed survey instruments, the research statistician and, in the case of the qualitative data base, the research associate. Still further, it is important to point out that in this report the names used are fictitious and, where it is possible, no name is used. Moreover, where possible, the ethnographer has refrained from using extremely sensitive information or information which might identify the individual(s) being discussed, despite the use of codes, etc.

c. Phase 3--Observations

The third phase of the study included classroom observations and home visitations which followed the completion of the formal interview phase of the study. Beginning just after spring break ended, each key informant was observed for one or two days from the time he/she prepared for school in the morning until after dinner in the evening and/or until the parent(s) completed the interview with the researcher.

The general point of this segment of the research was to get a complete view of the student's life both in and out of school; to see

the conflicts and contradictions, if any, as well as to verify components of the formal interview data collected during the prior stage of the study. The researcher either walked to school with the student informant, gave the student a ride to school in her car, or rode the school bus or public transportation with him/her. Upon arrival at school, the ethnographer followed each student's individual schedule, attending all classes and observing him/her during the lunch period.

What occurred after classes ended at 3:00 p.m. varied with each key informant. Some members of the sample group were participants in school clubs and attended club meetings after school. Others were athletes and were required to attend track, cheerleading, basketball, or baseball practice, weight training for football, etc. Still others had chores at home or after-school employment which necessitated getting home or to work as quickly as possible.

In addition to the interviews and observations of students, school personnel, and family members, the ethnographer spent many hours talking with ministers, shopkeepers, community leaders, and other area residents. She also walked through the entire school neighborhood, visiting churches, stores, etc., and participated in many community activities such as religious services, recreational classes, meetings of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, and special events sponsored by various local organizations.

C. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS[1] AND IMPLICATIONS

This research study of Black students' school success presents preliminary findings from a two-year ethnographic study conducted during school years 1982-83 and 1983-84 in a senior high school in a historically Black section of Washington, D.C. The central goals of the study are to (1) suggest a culture-specific explanation for Black students' academic performance which is formulated around the oppositional nature of Black-white social relations; (2) seek to answer a fundamental question in anthropological research: What does the individual have to know and/or believe in order to function appropriately in the roles available in the culture?; (3) identify and describe the salient and culturally specific characteristics of Black adolescents who do well in school, as compared to those who do not, and to determine to what extent the unique features of the successful students are a function of their degree of encapsulation in the Black fictive kinship system; (4) offer a model for explaining the performance differential between Black and white adolescents, as well as the academic excellence of a limited number of Black adolescents in the school context; (5) present interpretations of data--ethnographic and quantitative--emerging from the selected research site over the two-year period; and (6) discuss the policy and practical implications of the findings generated by this study.

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[1]The findings emerging from this study are quite extensive. Not all of them will be discussed in their brief preliminary report. Only some of the more salient ones are included here. Many more of the findings will be included in the final report which will be submitted at a later date.

It is important to note here that an important assumption undergirding this research effort is the anthropologist's view that Black students' academic effort in the school context is a direct reflection of a group perception that criteria other than school-related skills and expertise are influential in Black Americans' efforts to "make it," i.e., become successful as defined by the dominant society. In other words, it is widely believed that Black students must possess a set of "supplementary skills" (e.g., athletic, musical, etc.) that other, non-Black students do not need as prerequisites for success. This perception produces a response on the part of Black students which is obviously engendered by the historical and structural experiences of subordination and exploitation of Black Americans by white Americans. At the secondary level, Black students are: (1) critically conscious of the general historical experience of Black people in America, their lack of formal instruction in this area notwithstanding; and (2) aware of the importance of race and racial group membership in determining whether one is favored or disfavored in the obtainment of social advantages in America today. This cultural knowledge is influential in their general response to schooling and its curricular offerings, and this knowledge tends to undermine perseverance and efforts directed at the obtainment of school-related skills. Hence, it is of utmost importance for the reader to know that the preliminary research findings reported here are not intended to convey the impression that fictive kinship is the causal factor in the massive underachievement of Black adolescents in the school context. This is the case although, admittedly, the study was designed to highlight intra-group organization and its impact on school achievement. However, coexisting with

this orientation is a constant theme to be recounted in both the emerging theoretical and analytical components of the research. This theme might be stated in the form of a question: What is the influence and impact of the ecological conditions on the emergence and development of the indigenous response--fictive kinship--evident in the Black community? This two-tiered focus is used to illuminate the symbiotic relationship between the ecological conditions confronting Black Americans and the nature and configuration of their general response to the limitations imposed on them by their "effective environment" (see Ogbu 1982c). It is also used to show the influence of sociocultural factors in structuring a human population's achievement motive. Additionally, it is intended to demonstrate how Black teenagers are affected by these factors and how the existence of these factors affects school environment.

The preliminary findings emerging from this study are quite varied, and suggest a pattern of minimal effort and eschewal of those aspects of the school curriculum which are perceived to be beyond the purview of skills needed to perform the role repertoire available to Black Americans. Several of the more salient findings regarding schooling and Black adolescents in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the Capital Community are discussed here.

However, prior to a discussion of the preliminary findings emerging from this study, it is important to point out that the most significant finding emerging from this study of Black adolescents' school success is anchored in the problem of racial and personal identity, i.e., "Who Am I?" Unfortunately, these phenomena--racial and personal identities--appear to receive virtually no attention in

the school context. Instead, the major focus of the high school curriculum appears to be the mastering of a cadre of technological skills intended to prepare the young adult for the specific and varied technological information the work world demands of him or her (see Everhart 1983; McDermott and Hood 1982). This is laudable but apparently ineffective when teaching Black adolescents in a castelike social context. Institutional psychology (see McDermott and Hood 1982) is implicated in the massive failure and underachievement of Black adolescents in the school context because, among other things, it has generally loaned its expertise to the learning of technological information, ostensibly enabling the students to obtain jobs and the material symbols of success and power while, on the other hand, neglecting a critically important prerequisite in the lives of these young adults: their individual and collective identity. The "information giving" (see Everhart 1983) mode characteristic of most high school curricula has resulted in a heightened sense of alienation on the part of Black adolescents, especially since the information given does not enable them to sort out the most critical question confronting them: "Who am I?" (see also Richburg 1986; Sargent 1985a; Slaughter 1974). Essentially, then, the value of schooling as an institution in the American context appears to be to produce or develop human products which can be effectively used in the American work context. It is against this background that the following tentative findings are presented.

First, the most ubiquitous, and perhaps the most significant, finding emerging from this study is the persistence of the correlative

relationship between the D.C. Public Schools[1] system of schooling and the role repertoire of Black Washingtonians. The emerging findings suggest that the DCPS acts as a kind of "'boot camp'" (Everhart 1983; see also Ogbu 1978, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c) for teaching Black adolescents the appropriate behaviors and skills needed for the limited role repertoire available to them in the Washington area economy. This is evident in the very structure and organization of the schools, with most of them organized in such a way that they foster the achievement of a few at the expense of the masses. It is also apparent at Capital High where "streaming" (see Schafer and Olexa 1971) is overtly practiced. The "boot camp" or preparatory nature of public schooling in Washington appears to equip the masses of Black students with limited skills and a cadre of behaviors which will enable them to adapt successfully to roles as office workers, including clerks and other low-skill "white collar" occupations, store clerks, assembly line workers, taxpayers, church members, welfare recipients and prison inmates, etc. Essentially, the preliminary findings reported here suggest that most of the students graduating from high school in Washington are exposed to a curriculum (at the high school level in 1982: one year of required math; one year of U.S. History, one semester of science; one semester of American Government; three to four years of English;

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[1]It is important to emphasize that, while I am identifying and describing the conditions in the D.C. Public Schools in this study, this phenomenon is not uniquely characteristic of schools in Washington, D.C. My hunch is, and there is a body of literature to support my view, that most American public schools operate in this manner. The DCPS is identified and addressed specifically only because it was the focus of the research effort. The implications noted here are probably appropriate for most urban school systems in America.

several electives; there was no foreign language requirement; no requirement in Afro-American History or Culture, etc.[1]) which minimally prepares them for the world of work and pertinaciously underprepares them for the high-status jobs and careers which exist in the white collar, highly skilled governmental bureaucracy characteristic of the Washington, D.C., economy.

A second preliminary finding indicates that the oppositional process extant in the fictive kinship system undermines academic achievement among Black adolescents, especially among Black males.[2] Apparently, this outcome is largely unconscious or, alternatively, only partially understood by the students. This lack of insight or "partial insight" (Willis 1981) on the part of the students leads them to unwittingly assist the DCPS in its "boot camp" mandate. The larger Black community's creative response to what Green (1981:77) has described as "the trinity of prejudice, discrimination, and segregation" is obviously alive and functioning among Black adolescents in the school context. Interestingly, while the survival strategies developed by Black Americans in response to "the trinity" discussed above are implicated in their designation as a "persistent" or "enduring people," ironically, in many ways it is also a key factor in Black students' general eschewal of academic effort and persistence.

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[1]This was the core curriculum of the DCPS for students at the high school level during the base year (1982-83) of the research project. It is more important to note that this curriculum was expanded, requiring more math, science, and foreign language at the high school level after this study was begun.

[2]The findings and implications regarding gender are only noted here. They will be included and discussed in greater detail in the final report.

How and why the students seek to reproduce their existing enclaved status will be carefully delineated in the forthcoming final report.

The third preliminary finding reported here suggests the importance of the structural organization of public schooling in Washington, D.C., in Black adolescents' school performance. Like that of most other urban settings, the organizational structure is one in which "the student is conceived of as an isolated atom [my emphasis] removed from its social molecule, responsive only to impersonal, technical events arrayed before it" (Charters 1973; see also deLone 1979; Everhart 1983; McDermott and Hood 1982). In other words, the structural organization of schooling at Capital High is one which discounts the sociocultural context in which the student must function both within and outside the school context, demanding instead that the "legitimate" school structure replace all other prior or coexisting structures. In fact, the school structure generally demands of the student that he or she forgo identification and loyalty to the fictive kinship system, the quintessential symbol of Black Americans' emerging sense of peoplehood; it also undermines their perception of themselves as a distinct people whose unique historical experience separates them from all other social groups. The DCPS's implicit demand that students divorce themselves from their indigenous cultural context in order to be successful as defined by the larger, dominant society, suggests that the adaptation or response that Black Washingtonians have made (e.g., the development of a fictive kinship system) to the ongoing limitations in the opportunity structure is responsible for their lack of socioeconomic mobility comparable to that of white Washingtonians (see Ogbu 1978). Also, this demand of the public school system discounts or

minimizes the pervasive and persistent influence of the existing opportunity structure as it affects the Black community in the city. Additionally, the contemporary texture of fictive kinship as it exists in the Black community and in Washington, D.C., in particular, reflects the accuracy of the claims of researchers who maintain that ethnicity and ethnic identity is best viewed as a process which takes on the particular texture of the ecological conditions confronting the ethnic group in question (see Ogbu 1978; Spicer 1971, 1980; Staiano 1980). In the case of Black Washingtonians, many of the more overt symbols of exclusion and segregation are no longer in existence. There is also a weakening of the barriers to inter-group intercourse between Black and white Americans in the city, including the prohibition against inter-group marriage so important to the maintenance of structural differentiation (Gordon 1964). Nevertheless, underneath the veneer of "integration-land" (see Gaines-Carter 1985) is a cauldron of fear and anxiety, racially based, which reinforces the existence of fictive kinship as a factor in Black Washingtonians' and other Black Americans' social organization and behavior.

Also, Black Washingtonians' lack of economic control of the forces of production in the city reinforces the necessity for fictive kinship as the internal organizational structure within the Black community, as well as in their interactions with the holders of economic power--the dominant population. This existing social reality necessitates the perpetuation of the practice of clientship between Black and white Americans (see Ogbu 1981a), i.e., a relationship which is dependent upon the client being able to display appropriate deference and demeanor to the patron. This kind of relationship minimizes the

need for school credentials and expertise, highlighting instead the importance of behavior in Black Americans' upward mobility aspirations.

A fourth preliminary finding suggests that, in the school context, Black students' academic effort and achievement tend to reflect the effects of both fictive kinship and limitations in the opportunity structure. These factors appear to be the two greatest obstacles to academic achievement at Capital High. This finding lends support to Ogbu's (1981c) assertion about the relationship between the role repertoire of a social group and their effort in the school context: they mirror each other. At Capital High, the students are keenly aware of the lack of opportunities for Black people in their community. This is evident in many areas of their young lives, but particularly in their parents' and relatives' inability to find employment and/or their consistent consignment to low-status jobs, with limited mobility and income, despite their school credentials, particularly the high school diploma, and their individual performance at their job sites. Ironically, while virtually all of the parents of the students who served as the key informants are gainfully employed, their incomes are quite limited, often not meeting and/or exceeding the official poverty-line income of $10,178 for a family of four in 1983 (see Rich 1985). This is the case in spite of the fact that a majority of them are high school graduates. In response to this experienced reality, most of the students at Capital High have learned to minimize the importance of hard work, initiative, respect for constituted authority, etc. They appear to have learned to disvalue these qualities in their efforts to get ahead, because their contextual reality confirms their emerging perceptions regarding the saliency of race as a criterion in

social mobility and the lack of consistency between the work ethic and social mobility in the Black community. They also appear to disbelieve the widely espoused claims--claims that they themselves espouse--that an adequate education is the most obvious means of "making it" in America. Most of their behaviors are in conflict with the ideals of hard work and competition in school or, alternatively, in the case of the academically successful students, involve the development of strategies which enable them to "appear not to but to" (see Holt 1972) work to achieve academic success. The appearance of a lack of effort minimizes the possibility of group estrangement and hostility. It also protects the individual from ridicule in case he or she does not "make it," despite enormous effort in the school context. Capital High students also appear to aspire to careers in fields well above the job ceiling so prevalent in their community. However, their lack of effort in the school context seriously undermines their articulated claims and the possibility that they will have the prerequisite entry-level credentials and/or skills to realize their espoused aspirations, to say nothing of the pervasive influence of a persistent job ceiling and racial discrimination on their articulated dreams.

Additionally, those students who, through the organization of the school and the latent and not-so-latent system of "streaming" or tracking (see Douglas 1964; Goodlad 1984; Hansen 1964; Oakes 1985; Rosen 1976; Schafer and Olexa 1971) existing in the entire D.C. Public School System and at Capital High, manage to achieve academic excellence do so at great risk to their relationships with their peers and their sense of belongingness in the Black community (see Gray 1985; Richburg 1986; Sargent 1985a). This finding is in no way a reflection

on the students' general desire and need to learn and function, a desire of all human beings in all cultural systems. It is instead an attempt to reconcile the apparent contradictions in the students' lack of effort in the school context and their articulated aspirations. The small number of students who perform well do so at great risk to the existing cultural boundaries, and in spite of the apparent limitations in the Washington opportunity structure. Because fictive kinship and other secondary discontinuities (Ogbu 1982a) in the school context are much more evident today than in the earlier history of Black people in Washington, the number of Black adolescents who opt for school success appears to be declining.[1]

The existence of this phenomenon at the high school level is fraught with conflict because so many of the academically unsuccessful students performed well on school measures of success during their elementary and, to a lesser extent, their junior high school years. Additionally, although they appeared to be highly motivated to learn the school curriculum during their earlier schooling, there does not appear to be a similar commitment to school norms and values at the high school level. Apparently, the successful students are able to maintain their academic achievement record primarily because they are "streamed" and placed in classes which minimize their interaction with their less successful peers. The primary variable in this not-so-latent system of tracking is the organizational and instructional

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[1] In some ways, this statement appears to contradict the evidence, which will be presented in the final report, indicating that fictive kinship in the Black community emerged during the period of slavery. It does not. Apparently, fictive kinship is more evident today because of the appearance of a greater number of options for Black Americans (see Staiano 1980).

nature of the school (see Schwartz 1981). The most successful students at the school are isolated and segregated in classes with students who, like themselves, have a history of school success or, alternatively, have parents who are highly visible, prominent members of the middle class Black community of Washington, and are therefore assigned high-status or advanced classes because of "who they are" (particularistic criteria). On the other hand, those students whose academic history, uncertainty, or personal desire to remain with their classmates as they leave junior high school leads them to eschew the more rigorous academic program or the Advanced Placement courses are, in the final analysis, consigning themselves to an academic graveyard and ultimately very "small future[s]" (see deLone 1979).

Another finding indicates that the successful students are imbued with an ideology of distinctiveness, repeatedly assured that they are very much unlike those students who are not involved in the AP course sequence at the school. This perception of distinctiveness is influential in helping them to withstand the pressures and tensions from those elements both within and outside the school context which attempt to keep them from crossing established cultural boundaries. Features within this ideology include isolation from the masses of students, special bus service to and from the school site, assignment to special homerooms, and special school personnel (e.g., counselors and teachers) whose sole responsibility is to work with them in an effort to meet their specific academic needs and post-high school goals. They are also provided with special seminars, assemblies, and contact with officials who can be extremely influential in helping them to obtain their individual goals. This distinctiveness extends to their efforts

to obtain summer employment, which are aided and abetted by the school personnel who work very hard at finding jobs for them which are commensurate with their special skills and abilities and their espoused post-high school goals. Unlike their unsuccessful counterparts, the successful students are not allowed to have jobs during the regular school year because, it is argued, work will interfere with their ability to maintain the high level of performance so necessary in the classes they are assigned. In general, every effort is made to limit the "successful" students' contact with the less successful students in any meaningful way. This is done because it is thought that those students whose academic history and effort are unlike those of the students assigned to the more advanced classes, will have a harmful, negative effect on the successful students.

Despite the ideology of distinctiveness and the tensions embedded in the organizational and instructional structure at the school, and the herculean efforts of school personnel to implement it, there are many instances where the ideals and the reality do not mesh. The academically successful male students, for example, are much less likely to conduct their lives according to the constraints fostered by these existing structures. The desire to be involved with their peers in sports and entertainment often leads to "breakdowns" (see Whitehead 1986), i.e., to conflict and disjuncture between the espoused goals of the distinctive ideology and the desires and goals of the individual students. There is also the male students' tendency to try and pacify their parents and other significant adults by taking courses in the Advanced Placement sequence while at the same time seeking the approval and support of their peers. While females who are participants in the

Advanced Placement courses experience similar tensions and pressures, these tensions and pressures are far less intense and appear not to have the same force and impact as those experienced by the male students. In general, there is a high cost associated with school success at Capital High for those students who elect to take the academically more rigorous course sequence.

This preliminary finding is particularly interesting because, as Bowles and Gintis (1976:102) rightfully point out, schools "reproduce inequality rather than correct it." Schwartz (1981) reports similar conclusions regarding the nature and influence of the organizational and instructional structure on school achievement and effort in that she, too, argues that these variables--the organizational and instructional structures--are more critical in school achievement than individual effort. At Capital High, the existing inequities in the organizational and instructional structures are implicated in the flourishing of fictive kinship and other indigenous responses in the larger Black community in the school context. While it is often claimed that schools are designed to eliminate the existing inequities in the larger social system, causing the next generation of adults to be less victimized by structural limitations, the findings emerging from the study reported here document how the castelike social structure is reproduced in the school context, fictive kinship notwithstanding. The existence of a system of streaming or tracking, even in a predominantly Black school setting, is not a benign phenomenon. Rather, it is critically important in reproducing that which is unacceptable to nondominant group members in the existing castelike structure.

In a predominantly Black high school, socially defined race is not a salient feature in the organizational and instructional program (see Shimahara 1983); it is not one of the features used to separate "us from them." Instead, tracking according to ability and some other social criteria become the means by which academic achievement and/or distinctiveness are maintained. As the above analysis shows, students at Capital High are assigned to either the high or the low track at the school. If they are allowed to participate in the high track, academic success is enhanced, largely because of the nature of the organizational and instructional program. On the other hand, students who are either assigned to the low-track curriculum and/or choose to limit their schooling to courses in the low track are almost guaranteed lack of opportunity for mobility, regardless of the level of their academic ability.

Not surprisingly, then, the response of the unsuccessful students to the perception of differentiation among the student body is to seek solace in the collective, i.e., to avoid involvement in activities and/or course-related work which would bring attention to them. Unfortunately, this reaction on the part of the low-streamed students reinforces negative perceptions of them by school administrators and teachers. The assumptions that they: (1) lack ambition, (2) are unwilling to work, (3) lack motivation, (4) do not really want to go to college, (5) are largely on welfare, and (6) have no desire to change their socioeconomic conditions, are quite widespread at the school. While there are <u>some</u> students in the low-stream as well as some students in the high-stream curriculum who display <u>some</u> of these attitudes and behaviors, they certainly are not characteristic of most

of the students at the school. Ironically, as Leacock (1969) noted in a study of middle- and low-income students and teachers in several schools in New York City, in many instances when students in the low-stream curriculum display those characteristics that the organizational and instructional structures declare they do not have, i.e., initiative, ambition, desire to change their lowly socioeconomic conditions, etc., in ways which suggest that they do not need the approval of school personnel, they are essentially punished for it. Although this is also applicable to the high-streamed students, the repercussions or consequences are far more severe for the low-streamed students. They are obliged to be polite, obedient, etc., in order to earn the grades, obtain the recommendations, etc., of school personnel. Far more than the high-streamed students, low-streamed students must have sponsors or patrons, and in order to be "sponsored," one must display appropriate "client" behaviors. Students who are not good clients are unable to obtain the sponsorship of a patron, further diminishing (limiting) their "small future[s]" (deLone 1979).

This reality is borne out in the fact that the "successful" students in the regular or low-stream curriculum receive very good classroom grades, but perform miserably on most standardized measures. One possible explanation for this inverse correlation, which appears to be more prevalent among the female than the male students, is that their behavior--how they interact with and respond to teacher and other school personnel demands of them--is a more salient criterion in the grades they earn in school than their actual performance and/or latent capability. This phenomenon deserves further study, primarily because of the enormous sex differences attendant to it. Low-streamed females

at Capital earn high or good grades in school much more often than the similarly placed male students. Is this the result of the female students' greater willingness to be clients? Are the male students' greater tendencies to test the rules and to assert their emerging manhood critical factors in their lower school achievement? Are they unconsciously punished for their greater assertiveness and/or unwillingness to obey school norms and rules? These are questions which could be answered in future ethnographic studies. Such studies are warranted based on the present study's findings: The standardized test scores of the low-streamed male and female students in the sample group are largely undifferentiated, regardless of whether they are in the high or low categories of the present study. There are some exceptions to this observation. In general, however, there is a lack of differentiation in standardized test scores, although there is an enormous discrepancy between the classroom grades of the low-streamed males and females. Further research would illuminate the latent and not-so-latent processes at work in the classroom context which lead to this finding.

As these preliminary findings suggest, schooling appears to be totally impotent in changing the existing socioeconomic realities of the students in the Capital Community. Indeed, the evidence marshalled here suggests that schooling as operationalized at Capital High is implicated in the continuing existence of the castelike "effective environment" of Black Washingtonians. These findings also suggest that most of the students will leave Capital High School both unprepared to compete with the dominant white population in the surrounding suburban area, and unknowledgeable about who they are; they will leave it having

memorized a lot of information, but with few analytical skills, particularly if they are low-streamed students. Thus, the vast majority of Black adolescents at the research site who remain in school for the required number of years will leave with the desired credentials in hand, i.e., a high school diploma, but they will not have (1) acquired, in the school context, the prerequisite technical and interactional skills needed to function in the highly valued jobs and careers available in the existing bureaucratic structure of Washington and the surrounding suburbs, or (2) come to know who they are as individuals and/or as Black Americans. This is particularly unacceptable because the DCPS is organized and administered by Black officials and it serves a predominantly Black population. These social facts--a predominantly Black board of education, a Black superintendent and a predominantly Black teaching staff--should suggest a greater commitment on the part of school personnel to the elimination of caste barriers which are school based. In other words, Black adolescents in Washington should be so well prepared in the school context, in part because of the extraordinary commitment of their teachers and other school personnel, that the barriers which are presently used to "disqualify" them (e.g., performance on standardized measures of school success) for the most prestigious jobs and careers in the opportunity structure are rendered ineffective, primarily because the teachers equip the students with the requisite skills needed to overcome the state-administered barriers to social mobility. Furthermore, this should be possible for the vast majority of students, their parents' level of schooling, low-status role repertoire, etc., notwithstanding.

What, then, are some of the policy implications of the preliminary findings presented, in terms of school policy at both the state and national levels, as well as within individual school boundaries? What can teachers and other practitioners learn from these preliminary findings which is culturally significant and will positively influence their teaching styles and expectations? How might this newly obtained insight regarding expectations and understanding of Black teens enhance rather than limit their school effort and performance? There are numerous implications which emanate from this analysis, in terms of both content and methodology, some of which are discussed below.

First, it is important to point out, again, that the type of research conducted in this study did not have as a primary goal the finding of "solutions" to the achievement problems so rampant at Capital High. Instead, the primary focus of the research reported here can best be described as basic research, i.e., research designed to identify and understand the problem or problems confronting a Black adolescent population in the school context, although it is probably quite clear that some of the preliminary findings emerging from this study can be used to solve <u>some</u> of the problems confronting all segments of the research population--high- as well as underachieving students. This was the approach utilized in this study--basic research--because the evidence available to the researcher, the anthropologist, prior to her tenure in the field, suggested that the nature of the problems confronting Black adolescents is not as well understood as it perhaps should be, nor is it quite clear how the problems confronting them originated; further, it is even less apparent as to why these problems--limited academic success and massive underachievement in the

high school population of Black adolescents--persist. Hence, the failure of the explanations of social scientists regarding the achievement differential of Black-white students in the school context was a primary motivator of the study reported here. Also, the apparent lack of accurate identification of the problem or problems confronting subordinate or castelike (see Ogbu 1978) nondominant-group students in the classroom context, coupled with the concurrent emphasis on intervention strategies (e.g., how to teach the non-motivated child, how to individualize instruction, etc.), tends to lead to further obscuration rather than illumination.

The tentative implications emerging from these preliminary findings are for the most part student-specific. A few of the more salient ones are reported here, including a pervasive perception which indicates that most of the students do not view the opportunity structure as one which discounts their racial group membership, or at the very least views it as an unimportant or secondary factor. Their verbal declarations or articulated views to the contrary notwithstanding, most of the students in the two research samples possess a stronger desire to be viewed and/or identified as "real" Black people rather than "Oreos" (see Cary 1976), fostering within them a willingness to forgo academic effort for strong identification with the group. This suggests a definite need to have school policies directed more toward the group, or "collective," if there is a real desire to increase the academic performance of a significantly larger proportion of the Black high school population.

The actual form and configuration of this curriculum modification need to be identified in research specifically designed to determine curriculum-specific strategies. Obviously, such research would be

rooted in the analysis presented here, but it would not be as comprehensive or detailed. Rather, it would limit its focus to the identification and construction of a curriculum which would incorporate the more communal learning behaviors described in this preliminary report. More importantly, it is strongly believed by this researcher that, given the nature and structure of the existing dominant cultural system, it is only through the development of such modified curriculum goals and ideals that the District of Columbia Public Schools and other large urban school systems will be able to significantly transform the achievement level of Black adolescents. A policy change of this nature and magnitude will inevitably minimize the rampant tendency of Black adolescents to equate academic excellence with the co-optation of group members by the dominant society, which they view as a much too costly price to pay in order to "make it." Hence, it is reasoned that a change in the existing curriculum which minimizes what Weis (1985) has described as a tendency on the part of many Black students to view some curricular requirements as "theirs" [white Americans'], not ours," would result in greater academic effort and higher academic achievement. On the other hand, failure to make this critical change will surely result in the continuation of the present massive underachievement described in this preliminary report.

Among the implications emerging from this study is the seemingly immutable relationship between the existing social organization of Black Americans and their children's continuous efforts to transplant their indigenous cultural system in the school context. This hostile response to the socially sanctioned organizational structure of the school offers empirical evidence of both the importance and tenacity

of the oppositional cultural frame in the Black community (see Fordham 1982b; Ogbu 1983a, 1983b), and a perceptual reality which reinforces their lack of willingness to make the adaptations necessary to perform well in school. In general, there is widespread rejection--both consciously and unconsciously--of the effort to disband the existing fictive kinship system. This is particularly evident in "post-integration" (see Gaines-Carter 1985) America, when many of the more blatant barriers to Black Americans' efforts to change their lowly status in the existing social system are neither legal nor practiced through illegal means. The fact that there is some evidence to support the claim of replacement of the legally sanctioned barriers to social mobility with more subtle barriers, does not capture either the complexity of the response of Black Americans to increasing opportunities to interact with their dominant-group counterparts, or the hegemony of the dominant cultural system in the school context. Apparently, fictive kinship--the critical symbol of Black Americans' social organization--emerged in response to the hegemony of the dominant cultural system, and will remain in place until the conditions responsible for its emergence and continued existence dissipate. This observation follows the premise suggested by Ogbu (1978, 1982a); namely, secondary cultural discontinuities like fictive kinship emerge among castelike minorities in response to a long-term subordinate relationship between the dominant and nondominant populations. A critical, albeit a corollary, assumption advanced by Ogbu is his assertion that secondary discontinuities, like fictive kinship, emerge only <u>after</u> an extended period of contact between those who oppress and those who are oppressed. The findings reported here tend to validate Ogbu's (1982a) theoretical assertion regarding the

nature and texture of secondary discontinuities. Given this reality in the school context, how might we change the effort and therefore the performance of Black adolescents?

There is no easy answer to this question. Apparently, the existence of fictive kinship is dependent upon a strong identity which is in opposition to that of the dominant population in this country. Since that is the case, it seems to follow that enhanced school performance among Black adolescents is dependent upon a changed perception on their part, of the relationship of schooling to the cultural hegemony of the dominant population. The evidence to support the importance of this perceptual reality and its relationship to school performance and behavior is evident in the data culled from the high-achieving students; they generally insist that they do not perceive the system of schooling made available to them as being implicated in the oppressive nature of the Black ecological structure in Washington, D.C., and the nation at large. In fact, they see schooling as an institution which is best characterized by its ability to change the lowly status of Black Americans, making them able to compete on an equitable basis with their dominant-group counterparts. The high-achieving students also experience very little intrapsychic ambiguity around the issue of the value or worth of schooling per se. This stands in stark contrast to their ambivalent feelings about how to cope with their less successful peers' ambivalent feelings about the value and worth of schooling. While this is not as true for the high-achieving males, it is generally true for all of the high-achieving students--male and female. Consequently, if we are able to change Black adolescents' largely unconscious perception of the incestuous relationship between schooling in this country and

the negative, oppressive features of the larger, dominating social structure, we will be able to increase the number of students who are willing to make the effort to do well in the school context. Hence, an area which is in need of further research is how to develop interventionist strategies for producing these desired changes in Black adolescents' perception of the correlative relationship between schooling and the dominating social structure.

A second implication emerging from this study is the tremendous need for teachers and other school personnel to understand and appreciate the nature and texture of the existing social organization in the contemporary Black community. At the same time, they must become sensitized to the harmful effects likely to emerge were they to discount and continually discredit its importance to the children and their sense of who they are. It is therefore critically important for teachers and other school officials not only to become knowledgeable of the many ways in which the existing fictive kinship system structures the lives of the students they teach, their parents, and other Black adults in the Capital Community, but also to learn to use their knowledge of the importance of fictive kinship and its prominence in the Black community to enhance rather than suppress the academic effort and performance of the students at the school.

For example, one of the ways school officials, including classroom teachers, might demonstrate their sensitivity to the existing fictive kinship system is to de-emphasize the traditional focus on individualistic achievement and emphasize, instead, an orientation which supports the "collectivity." On the other hand, teachers and other school personnel might be advised to instill and reinforce the central premises

of the fictive kinship organizational structure by encouraging students to seek the presumed benefits of schooling in order to enhance the survival and mobility of the social group--all of Black America. This kind of "subversive" orientation will likely lead to greater effort and a strongly visible link between the students' behavior and the status of all of Black America.

Additionally, in recognition of the claim made by many researchers, including Ogbu (1978; see also Anderson 1973, 1975; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Spivey 1978), that the system of schooling available to Black Americans is essentially one which "disqualifies" them for the high-status jobs and careers in the social system, Black and other concerned teachers might focus much of their teaching energy in the following areas: (1) helping Black students become fully cognizant of this sociocultural reality by documenting, historically, how schooling for Black Americans has led to their lack of qualification for specific jobs, careers, etc., thereby instilling in them the motivation to exceed the societal expectations established for them; (2) helping them to unlearn much of the self-deprecating information learned in school, through the public media, etc., about why Black students perform as they do in the school context; and (3) empowering them with the pure school-related skills, or what Gramsci (1971) describes as "cultural capital," which, in effect, endows them as "subversive" agents, willing and capable of producing consequences which are unintended vis-a-vis the system of schooling made available to them. In this way, Black people can become directly and critically involved in working to change the "effective environment" they have inherited and continue to occupy.

Furthermore, the teachers' social and political ideologies must not incorporate the same fears and incapacitating responses noted above in the students' responses to the institution of schooling. In other words, their teachers must not evince a fear of "acting white." Teachers who are not fully committed to the ideal goals of teaching and learning will invariably undermine and exacerbate the incipient beliefs and responses of the students regarding the value of schooling to the Black community. Also, teachers who are themselves wrestling with the question "Who am I?" are not very good academic models for Black adolescents.

Another implication which emerges from this study is related to the ones discussed above: both research populations--the ethnographic sample and the larger representative sample groups--display evidence that they are in what Cross (1971) has defined as the "preencounter or prediscovery stage" of Black liberation, in that their world view is dominated by "Euro-American determinants." While it is true that this phenomenon is more clearly evident in the high-achieving students in both samples, their verbal responses are nevertheless not completely analogous to the description of Black people in this stage of discovery as offered by Cross. As he suggests, their verbal responses indicate some evidence of cultural confusion and disorientation; many of their behaviors negate these verbal declarations. In contrast with the widely held perception that the process of achieving Blackness which began during the early sixties has ended, and that today's Black American students are free of the confusion and disorientation which was characteristic of the experience of their parents or the group Eleanor Holmes Norton designates the "crossover generation" (see

Denton and Sussman 1981), the responses of the students studied at Capital High suggest a continuation of that process. Indeed, as these analyses show, Black adolescents experience an inordinate amount of confusion and distrust around the issue of "Who am I?" Also, this uncertainty and confusion leads many of them to seek disidentification and/or disassociation from their indigenous cultural group. Additional research is needed in order to enumerate the types of intervention needed to minimize the pervasive alienation experienced by many Black adolescents in the school context. Such research might also be directed at delineating specific strategies which can be effectively utilized in the school context to mitigate the perception of "unilineal acculturation."

In stark contrast to the implications indicated above, a fourth implication suggests that for many of the students in the research samples--ethnographic and quantitative--, the fear of "unilineal acculturation," or what I have elsewhere described as the "fear of acting white" (see Fordham 1985) affects, to a much greater degree, the school behaviors and performances of the underachieving student population. This is not to suggest that the high-achieving students do not experience this same fear; they do. However, unlike the underachieving students, the high-achieving population appears to be both more willing and better able to cope with the resultant uneasiness and sense of group alienation associated with academic excellence. This finding suggests that for most Black adolescents the fear of being perceived as "un-Black" and/or "anti-Black" acts as a deterrent to academic excellence in the school context. This perception coexists

with the cultural confusion and disorientation perception described above, in implication number three.

Also, this suggests that there is a really strong need for Black adolescents to be taught by: (1) teachers who are not just intellectually conscious of the existence of the fictive kinship system, because it is their indigenous cultural system and/or they have read this preliminary report or some other valid source, but are thoroughly immersed in the cultural significance of this reality and in pedagogical strategies and techniques which will either eliminate or minimize the perception of a loss of one's identity if one is successful in the school context; (2) teachers who are not only aware of the existence of this phenomenon in the Black community, including the school context, but who, at the same time, do not discount its existence in favor of the more individualistic hegemony of the dominant culture, which is apparently at the base of the school curriculum; (3) teachers who are sensitive to the latent and frequently unconscious impact the fear of being labeled "anti-Black" or "non-Black" has on the interactional style and behavioral strategies of today's Black adolescents.

Furthermore, this study suggests that, unlike earlier generations of Black adolescents who were relegated to a socially segregated social world, Black adolescents in "post-integration" (Aplin-Brownlee 1984) America are constantly struggling with a group identity which highly values encapsulation in the fictive kinship system, despite the existence of at least two prominent behavioral options--integration and separation. As this study demonstrates, a disproportionately large number of Black high school students opt for the latter of these two options--separation as opposed to integration. Therefore,

a major task confronting educators is to determine how to convince a larger number of students of the market value of schooling while at the same time assuring them that there is no need to fear the loss of one's identity as a result of academic excellence. This inference indicates that research of a different type is needed in order to document the kinds of interventionist strategies most likely to lead to the desired outcome: higher academic achievement among a larger group of Black adolescents at the high school level.

The students' "partial penetration" (see Willis 1981) or insight into the web of oppression which surrounds them leads to the fifth implication included in this preliminary report: The students in the D.C. Public Schools must be carefully taught to distinguish between the obtainment of skills in the school context which will enhance the mobility goals of Black Americans as a group and their identity as members of a distinct social group. This is a rather difficult task because the students' conscious and unconscious "insight" leads them both to fear the thought of behaving in ways perceived to be the purview of white Americans, and to denigrate those members of the community who, despite their fear, opt to behave in ways comparable to those of white Americans. Perhaps the best way to minimize the estrangement and conflict which most of the students experience around this issue, is to make a concerted, systematic effort to define skills usually associated with school and schooling as skills which have historically been a critical component of Black life and culture, temporarily lost during the more than two hundred years Black Americans were enslaved in this country. While the specific details of how this would be done are not included here, it is an area which is

a prerequisite for the massive changes suggested by this study. Suffice it to note that Black adolescents must begin to perceive the public school system in a way comparable to the Black community's general perception of the Black church. While Black Americans are fully cognizant of the fact that Black and white Americans generally pray to and worship the same god, albeit in different contexts, they do not reject the church and its teaching because of a fear that if they choose to worship the same god as white Americans, they will be signaling to other Black people a desire to be white. This response to Christianity--"the white man's religion"--is probably attributable to the general perception, throughout their history in this country, that the church in the Black community is an indigenous institution, its white origins notwithstanding. Hence, it is possible to instill in Black people loyalty to an institution that also serves the white community, but, as the above analysis shows, this kind of loyalty tends to surface only when Black Americans begin to believe that, despite its origins, the institution incorporates their culture and administers to their unique needs. A comparable perception of schools and schooling is critically important because social groups tend to act on their perceptual rather than an objective reality (see Y. Cohen 1971; see also J. Williams 1985). The important issue, then, is how to alter Black adolescents' perception of the role of school and schooling to one which on the one hand leads them to view the institution as enhancing the lives and socioeconomic conditions of Black Americans and, on the other, to see its absence in the lives of group members as their personal failure to improve the life of the "collective." Obviously, this will not be an easy task; in fact, it is one of the most

difficult tasks confronting Black Americans, a human population whose role repertoire in a technologically advanced social system is clearly bounded, making it difficult for individual members to respond to changing techno-economic forces.

On the other hand, to continue to accept or adapt to the existing limitations in the opportunity structure will result in even greater "partial insight" and oppression on the part of Black students. For, as Freire (1970) notes, oppressed peoples must free not only themselves, but those who oppress them as well. Hence, Black Americans must take the initiative in changing the present relationship they have with the public system of schooling in America. Washington, D.C., appears to be the ideal setting for that kind of change effort.

A fifth implication is centered around the issue of methodology and social science research. As noted above, quantification has dominated social science research, particularly school-related research, with most researchers developing and using survey data to inform policy makers and the public at large of the attitudes, perceptions, values, etc., of the population studied. The findings emerging from this study bring the data from this research modality into serious question. Interestingly, the questions emerge only because the quantification findings differ so drastically from the ethnographic findings. These "breakdowns" are largely inexplicable without reference to the ethnographic research. On the contrary, "breakdowns" in the ethnographic findings are amenable to "resolutions and coherence" without reference to the quantitative findings because of the "thick descriptions" characteristic of the ethnographic component of the study. The primary breakdowns within the ethnographic and quantitative

analyses, and between the ethnographic and quantification findings, are evident because the articulated values, goals, beliefs, etc., of the students and other participants are not evident in actual practice. The "self-correcting" (see Agar 1982) nature of the ethnographic modality resulted in "resolution and coherence," despite the apparent breakdown. On the other hand, the greater linear focus of the quantitative modality made it virtually impossible to resolve apparent breakdowns in these data.

Hence, a primary inference emerging from this study is that, while quantification alone is well suited for getting at the articulated views of a human population, it is woefully inadequate in helping the researcher to detect whether the articulated views, values, beliefs, etc., are adhered to in actual practice. It is also not well suited to analyses which have as their goal cultural explanations of human behavior and actions. The major strength quantification gave to this research study was its usefulness as a research modality which enabled the researcher to acquire the normative, articulated views of a large segment of the student and non-student populations at the school. Paradoxically, it also enabled the researcher to validate the greater usefulness of ethnography as a research modality in the study of schools and schooling.

In conclusion, as the findings reported above indicate, schools are implicated in both the massive failure of Black adolescents and in the small number of such students who are successful. They are implicated because, as Bowles and Gintis (1976), Ogbu (1978), Schwartz (1981), and other researchers have pointed out, they are influential in reproducing the existing social structure rather than changing it.

Consequently, because the function of schools is determined by the larger social system, officials in the school context must be made aware of how the blind implementation of state-mandated curricular offerings, or what Cortes (1976) labels "nondecision-making," may reinforce the lack of academic achievement on the part of Black adolescents. Additionally, as the findings in this report demonstrate, when Black adolescents are given adequate support and encouragement, as the successful students at Capital are, academic excellence is the end result. On the other hand, when the support, encouragement, and expectations of school personnel are low, massive underachievement on the part of students is the unacceptable end outcome.

The findings from the sample group of students also reveal that academic excellence among the successful students is inevitable given the organizational and instructional support of school personnel. The organizational and instructional support of the school appears to nullify the impact of (1) the students' impoverished socioeconomic background, i.e., their parents' relegation to a low-status role repertoire; (2) the lack of parental support; (3) the existence of structural limitations in the opportunity structure; (4) the existence of fictive kinship; (5) social class differentiations within the Black community; (6) peer influence; (7) family background, i.e., whether the student is living in a home with both mother and father present, or in a home with only one parent, or some other family arrangement. In fact, at the high school level, all of these factors appear to take a back seat to the organizational and instructional support existing in the school context. Moreover, as this study shows, all of the above factors are present in the lives of the academically successful

students, i.e., they come from impoverished backgrounds, they live with only one parent, they do not have the support of their parents in their academic pursuits, their parents may or may not be on public assistance, may or may not have completed high school or college. Nonetheless, these students are successful in the school context in spite of these factors, because each of them experiences the unabashed support of the organizational and instructional structure in place at the school for the successful or high-streamed students. One can infer from these data that the successful students are willing to risk success because of the inordinate structural support they receive from the school. Consequently, one answer to the question central to the research reported here, "What, apart from high scores on school measures of success, distinguishes successful Black adolescents from their less successful peers?", appears to be found in how the school's organizational and instructional structure defines Black students. If they are given unqualified support from people they respect and admire, school success is the inevitable outcome because they are willing to accept the risks identified in this preliminary report and associated with school success.

On the other hand, it would be both cruel and mean-spirited to drastically enhance the academic performance of large numbers of Black students in the District of Columbia Public Schools while at the same time maintaining the exclusionary policies and practices in the work arena of the Washington economy. In that connection, it is therefore important to indicate that the changes in the curriculum described above are more likely to be effective if there are comparable changes in policies which are directed at the adult members of the Capital

Community, including family, economic (jobs and income), housing, and the general perception of the availability of opportunities in the larger society. Indeed, changes in the Capital Community and societal levels are prerequisites for the massive changes needed in the school context. This observation follows Ogbu's (1978, 1981g) assertion regarding the correlative relationship between the adult role repertoire of a social group and their children's performance on standardized measures of school success. In that regard, perhaps, as this study suggests, it is even more imperative that raising subsistence tasks or the role repertoire of the students' parents, in the Capital Community and the Washington community at large, be given top priority. Such a strategy obviously deviates from current policy where the emphasis is centered around increasing the "cultural capital" (Gramsci 1971) of the children whose parents are relegated to menial and other low-status subsistence tasks in the opportunity structure. Moreover, this strategy appears to be essential in order to discontinue the ongoing charade so apparent in the "reformism" motif characteristic of school-based social change, both historically and contemporarily. Social policy which is directed almost exclusively toward the changing of the role repertoire of Black Americans will have a filtering-down effect on the academic performance of Black children, particularly Black adolescents, in the school context. Like their dominant-group counterparts who work to obtain the skills needed to occupy subsistence tasks which are higher than or at least comparable to those of their parents, Black adolescents' changed perception of the opportunity structure will positively affect their academic effort, and at the same time change the texture and configuration of the existing

fictive kinship system. However, it must be stated, again, that changes in the existing Black ecological structure are intimately related to the subsistence tasks available to the adult members of the social group. This assertion in no way refutes the findings presented in this study because, as indicated above, Black adolescents appear to be intuitively or partially (see Willis 1981) aware of the lack of correlation between the individual achievements of members of the group and the elevation of the group as a whole. They are very much aware of the fact that a token number of Black Americans have "made it"; they are also very much cognizant of the lack of comparable elevation of Black Americans as a group.

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